THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • THURSDAY • JULY 11, 2024 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 22 • LATE CITY EDITION

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MODI IN AUSTRIA IN FIRST BILATERAL VISIT BY AN INDIAN PM IN 41 YEARS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday met Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer and discussed ways to expand bilateral cooperation

STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR INDIA-AUSTRIA TIES

India and Austria have decided to give a strategic direction to our relationship, Modi said after his "fruitful" talks with Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer. A blueprint for cooperation has been prepared for the coming decade, Modi said. The two leaders also discussed the Ukraine war, and Modi reaffirmed India's view that this is not the time for war

MODI INVITES BUSINESSES TO MAKE IN INDIA

- Modi invited the business community in Vienna to invest in India, highlighting his government's production-linked incentive scheme and the "fast-unfolding opportunities" in the country
- Infrastructure, renewable energy, and artificial intelligence are among the areas in which the two countries agreed to "combine strengths"

1983

WHEN INDIRA GANDHI VISITED AUSTRIA, MODI'S VISIT IS THE 1ST BY AN INDIAN PM SINCE THEN

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

ST CORPN ROW

ED officials at the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation office in Bengaluru on Wednesday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

ED raids ex-minister Nagendra, MLA Daddal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru/Ballari/Raichur

OFFICIALS of the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) conducted search and seizure operations at 18 locations in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana on Wednesday in connection with the multi-crore scam in Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Limited.

While the state government has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the scam, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case a few weeks ago based on a complaint by Union Bank of India.

It is learnt that after the premier investigation agency shared information related to the scam, the ED too registered a case under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The ED officials searched former minister for tribal welfare B Nagendra's two flats in an apartment complex on New BEL Road and his residence at Dollars Colony in Bengaluru. They also searched his house at Nehru Colony in Ballari.

Sources confirmed that documents related to agricultural and revenue land purchased recently were found in the minister's house in Ballari. In all, five places linked to the minister, his family members and friends were searched.

A senior police officer from Ballari said 20 police personnel were part of the operations. Personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were also deployed.

The officials searched the residences of Basanagouda Daddal, Raichur Rural MLA and chairman of the corporation, in Raichur and at Yelahanka in Bengaluru. It is said that the MLA was in Bengaluru, while his wife and son-in-law were in Raichur house. P4

Sec 125 on maintenance applies to Muslim women too, rules SC

Supreme Court's two-judge bench, in concurring verdict, says CrPC section is religion neutral

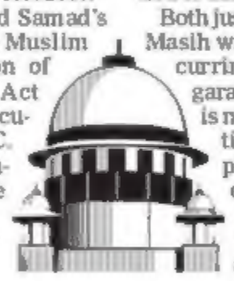
SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

IN a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled that all divorced women, irrespective of religion, were entitled to seek maintenance from their spouse under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Section 125 deals with maintenance for the wife, children and parents.

A bench of justices B V Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih pronounced the verdict after rejecting an appeal filed by Mohd Abdul Samad. He had been ordered by a family court in Telangana to pay a monthly maintenance of ₹20,000 to his ex-wife. The Telangana HC later decreased the quantum of maintenance to ₹10,000.

Samad had divorced her through triple talaq, which was outlawed by the Supreme Court in 2017 and criminalised by the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019.

The court rejected Samad's contention that the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act 1986 overrides the secular Section 125 CrPC. The 1986 law was introduced under the watch of the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi to soften the impact of the landmark Supreme Court verdict in the Shah Bano case in 1985, which said Muslim women were entitled to maintenance.



Both justices Nagarathna and Masih wrote separate but concurring verdicts. Justice Nagarathna said the 1986 Act is not a substitute for Section 125, nor has it supplanted it. Both can operate simultaneously at the option of a divorced Muslim woman. Excluding the application of Section 125 for a divorced Muslim woman would be in violation of Article 15(1) of the Constitution, which states that the state shall not discriminate on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, etc., she said.

"There cannot be disparity in receiving maintenance on the basis of the law under which a woman is married or divorced. The same cannot be a basis for discriminating a divorced woman entitled to maintenance as per the conditions stipulated under Section 125 of the CrPC or any personal or other law such as the 1986 Act," Justice Nagarathna said.

Justice Masih said rights of maintenance under Section 125 and the 1986 Act "parallelly exist in their distinct domains and jurisprudence".

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Both 'financial security' and 'security of residence' of women have to be protected and enhanced, Justice Nagarathna said. That would truly empower the homemakers who are the backbone of the family. It is within the family that values of life are learnt. It is these moral and ethical values that are inherited by generations. But, for that to happen, women in the family have to be respected and empowered, she said

18 KILLED

Horrific accident on Agra-Lucknow E-way

Eighteen people were killed and 19 injured when a double-decker sleeper bus headed for Delhi hit a milk tanker on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway on Wednesday, officials said. The accident occurred around 5 am near Jojikot village. President Droupadi Murmu condoled the loss of lives in the accidet

BENGALURU NEEDS SECOND INT'L AIRPORT, TALKS ON, SAYS MB PATIL

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

INDUSTRIES and Infrastructure Development Minister MB Patil on Wednesday said a second international airport for Bengaluru is certain and initial discussions are on in this regard. Bengaluru is a global city that needs another international airport with a capacity to handle 100 million passengers a year, he said.

The minister said the exclusivity clause with BIAL, which restricts building another airport within a radius of 150 km from KIA ends in 2033. "If we begin the process now, Bengaluru can have the second airport ready by then. Cities such as Mumbai and Delhi have second airports at a distance of 35-40 km. A decision will be taken soon to facilitate growth and improve the livability of Bengaluru," the Minister told reporters.

Patil said the second airport needs around 5,000 acres of land. A high-level committee will take a decision, taking several factors into account. The government can now identify land for the project off Kanakapura Road and Mysuru Road, at Magadi, Doddaballapura, Dabaspet and Tumakuru.

Ruling out the possibility of developing HAL Airport as the second international airport, the minister said that it is a small one and can't be expanded. "We have many options. According to norms, before deciding the airport's location, we have to consider various factors. We are taking experts' opinions," he said.

"KIA, which is the third busiest airport in the country after Mumbai and Delhi, can handle 52 million passengers and 0.71 million tonnes of cargo a year. Further expansion may help handle 110 million passengers and 1.10 million tonnes of cargo a year. The airport is expected to reach its peak handling capacity by 2035. Thereafter, there will be no scope to build runways as it already has two," he said. On Tamil Nadu's decision to build an airport at Hosur near Bengaluru, the minister said the CM of that state announced it after Karnataka started initial discussions on having the second airport. TN's decision would not affect Karnataka, he said.

"Let them do whatever they want. We are very serious about the second airport for Bengaluru. After taking over as minister, I decided to remove the exclusivity clause when the agreement came up for renewal," Patil said.

ISRO case fabricated by police, IB officials: CBI chargesheet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ T'Puram

Nambi Narayanan

R B Sreekumar

THE 1994 ISRO espionage case, in which former space scientist Nambi Narayanan was falsely implicated, was the result of a conspiracy hatched by certain police and IB officials, the CBI told a court here.

The case was initiated by then special branch inspector S Vijayan after Maldivian national Mariyam Rasheeda spurned his advances, the agency said in its chargesheet filed before the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court, Thiruvananthapuram.

It said Vijayan had seized the travel documents of Mariyam, rendering her unable to return before her visa expired. When she could not return, she was booked by the police for overstaying, it added.

The chargesheet said police officials S Vijayan (first accused), Sibi Mathews (second accused), K K Joshua (third accused) then IB deputy director R B Sreekumar (fourth accused), and IB officer P S Jayaprakash (fifth accused) played an active role in the conspiracy to fabricate documents that led to illegal arrests and subsequent torture.

On the direction of the then Crimes DIG Sibi Mathews, four persons — D Sashikumaran, K Chandersekhar, Nambi Narayanan, and S K Sharma — were arrested without any evidence. They were interrogated and allegedly tortured at the behest of Sibi, the chargesheet said.

It said the espionage angle was fabricated to sustain the wrongs committed by the officials of the state police and IB.

Sreekumar has been accused of facilitating unauthorised questioning of Mariyam and torturing the accused. "He was responsible for physical and mental torture of arrested victims during unauthorised interrogation in custody of Kerala police by the IB team," said the chargesheet.

Sreekumar was ADGP in Gujarat during the Godhra riots and testified against the state government before the Nanavati Commission that looked into the 2002 riots.

Responding to the development, Nambi Narayanan said: "I wanted to bring out the culprits, who had fabricated the case. It took about 24 years for that to happen. I've lost interest in the case. If required, I can be a witness... Now I am old and even if the accused are punished, I am not interested."

Govt affidavit cites IIT-M clean chit to NEET-UG

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

A day ahead of the hearing in the NEET-UG case in the Supreme Court, the Centre and the National Testing Agency, which conducted the test, filed their affidavits on Wednesday opposing demand for a retest.

Citing an exhaustive data analysis of the results by IIT Madras, it said no local set of candidates benefitted, leading to abnormal scores in the exam. "The marks follow a bell-shaped curve that is witnessed in any large-scale examination indicating no abnormality," the IIT, Madras report signed by its director V Kamakoti read.

As for the increase in marks, they were in the range of 550 to 720. This increase is seen across cities and centres, and is attributed to 25% reduction in syllabus. In addition, candidates obtaining such high marks are spread across multiple cities and multiple centres, indicating very less likelihood of malpractice, the IIT report said.

The NTA's affidavit described as fake a video on Telegram on the NEET-UG paper leak.

Going forward, the Centre assured that candidates would be chucked — during counselling or thereafter — if they are found to be beneficiaries of malpractice. Steps would also be taken to restore the sanctity of the NEET, it said.

"The Government is committed to ensure the sanctity of examinations and protect the interest of students. To ensure transparency, fairness, and credibility in public examination, Parliament has enacted Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 on February 12, and an Act was brought into effect on June 21," the Centre said.

"If an exercise is to be conducted by NTA and by the Union Government so as to identify any further beneficiaries of the question paper leakage, a considered decision at the policy level would have to be taken by the government on the status of the counselling," it added.

B'luru office stock may touch 340m sqft by 2030

PURAN CHOUDHARY @ Bengaluru

THE real estate sector is expected to see a huge boom in the country and Bengaluru will lead the trend. According to a report, Bengaluru's office stock (commercial spaces given out for leasing) is expected to touch 330-340 million sqft by 2030, the highest in the country. Currently, the city has 223 million sqft in Q2 2024, compared to 100 million sqft in 2013.

The report, 'Karnataka Horizon: Navigating Real Estate Excellence in the South', released by CBRE, the real estate consulting firm, and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), on Wednesday, stated that Bengaluru has emerged winner in the office absorption (occupied by companies) segment compared to Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai. The IT capital is also expected to see a spill-off of the trend in neighbouring districts.

Major industries contributing to this boom are technology engineering, manufacturing and Banking Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI). The

sectors that drive demand for office space are life sciences, aviation and automobile. Emerging locations in North Bengaluru such as Bellary Road, Yelahanka and other areas, including Varthur Road and Kadugodi, are evoking significant interest due to improved infrastructure.

Ram Chandnani, Managing Director, Advisory and Transaction Services, CBRE India, told *TNIE* that 48-50% of commercial space leasing comes from South India. "Bengaluru houses 41% of 1,600 Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India. This is because of the talent pool available in neighbouring states, growing infrastructure and sustainable cost of living, including rents which are affordable compared to other cities," he said. P2

Guarantees: Panel seeks report on 'diversion' of SCSP/TSP funds

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE National Commission for Scheduled Castes has issued a notice to the Karnataka government over the alleged diversion of funds meant for the welfare of SCs and STs to implement its five guarantee schemes.

Taking suo motu cognisance of the government's decision to divert Rs 14,730.53 crore from the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) to fund the guarantee schemes, the commission has sought a detailed report within seven days.

"The commission is mandated to monitor issues pertaining to development of Scheduled Castes in states, especially with reference to Special Component Plan (SCP) and Special Central Assistance (SCA), in pursuance of the power conferred upon it under Article 338," Rajeev Kumar Tiwari, joint secretary of the commission, stated. P4

REASI ATTACK

Terrorists took instructions from handlers in Pak: NIA

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

TERRORISTS who attacked a bus carrying pilgrims in Jammu's Reasi on June 9 received instructions from their handlers based in Pakistan, a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) found.

Sources said as per the evidence collected so far, before executing the attack, the remote handlers were contacted and permission taken.

The investigators found that a Rajouri-based overground worker (OGW) Hakam Khan alias Hakin Din, who has been arrested in connection with the case, had sheltered the Pakistani terrorists for nearly a week before the day the bus was attacked. Khan also helped them in reaching the attack spot, sources added.

"The arrested OGW played the role of a guide to take the terrorists to the spot where the incident took place and helped them identify the curve on the road, where vehicles used to slow down. Even the exit plan was finalised," a source aware of the probe details said.

The terrorists navigated the thick forests of Rajouri, Poonch, and Kathua using a mobile application, Alpine West, which gave them real-time information about culverts, dense forests and other obstructions, sources said.

The probe agency suspects the role of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Toiba's Sajjid Jutt in executing the attack. There is a reward of ₹10 lakh for providing information leading to his arrest in connection with another case. Two other Pakistani terrorists Sajid Ali and Abu Qatal are also suspected to have been involved in the attack, sources said.

Terrorists opened fire at a bus carrying pilgrims from Shiv Khori to Katra on the evening of June 9 in the Pouni area of Reasi. The driver of the bus lost control, causing it to fall into a gorge.

Nine people, including a minor, were killed in the attack.

EXPRESS READ

3 minors held for rape, murder of 8-year-old girl

Kurnool: An eight-year-old girl, who went missing on Sunday, was allegedly raped and killed by three minor boys in Nandyal district, Andhra Pradesh. Based on the confession of the suspects, the police have launched a search operation in the backwaters of Krishna river. The boys, aged between 11 and 15, reportedly admitted to taking the girl from the playground to a pump house on the outskirts of the village, and assaulting her. Fearing that the girl might complain, they killed her, the police said P5